



## What is the Statewide Assessment Program?

The Commissioner of Education must design and implement a statewide program of educational assessment that provides information for the improvement of the operation and management of public schools.<sup>1</sup> The statewide assessment program consists of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and statewide, standardized end-of-course (EOC) assessments.<sup>2</sup>

The FCAT consists of comprehensive grade-level assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and science.<sup>3</sup> Statewide, standardized EOC assessments are course-specific assessments.<sup>4</sup> The FCAT and statewide, standardized EOC assessments must be criterion-referenced tests<sup>5</sup> and must be aligned to the core curricular content established in the *Sunshine State Standards*, which specify the knowledge and skills that K-12 public school students are expected to acquire.<sup>6</sup>

In 2008, the Legislature required the State Board of Education to review the *Sunshine State Standards* and replace them with more specific, rigorous, and relevant *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*.<sup>7</sup> In order to align the assessment program with the *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards*, the Department of Education (DOE) is developing new statewide assessments, including the FCAT 2.0 and EOC Assessments.<sup>8</sup> In 2010, the Legislature significantly revised the statewide assessment program requirements, replacing several FCAT assessments with EOC assessments.<sup>9</sup> The following table shows the transition to the FCAT 2.0 and Florida EOC Assessments for academic years 2009-10 through 2013-14:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Section 1008.22(3), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)1. and 2., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>3</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)1., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)4., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. A criterion-referenced test (CRT) is an assessment in which an individual's performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students. CRTs show how well students performed on specific goals or standards rather than just telling how their performance compares to a norm group of students. Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Handbook: A Resource for Educators*, at 5 (2005), available at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/handbk/complete.pdf> [hereinafter *FCAT Handbook*]. Before 2008, the FCAT consisted of CRTs in reading, writing, mathematics, and science and norm-referenced tests (NRTs) in reading and mathematics. *Id.* In 2008, the Legislature repealed provisions authorizing use of the NRT. Section 7, ch. 2008-142 and s. 18, ch. 2008-235, L.O.F.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)1. and 2.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; see also *Sunshine State Standards Fact Sheet*.

<sup>7</sup> Section 1, ch. 2008-235, L.O.F., codified at s. 1003.41, F.S.

<sup>8</sup> State Board of Education, *Action Item: Approval for High School Accountability Assessments and High School Graduation Requirements* (May 18, 2010), available at [http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2010\\_05\\_18/coveraccountability.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2010_05_18/coveraccountability.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Chapters 2010-22 and 2010-48, L.O.F.

<sup>10</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Transition to Next Generation and Computer-Based Tests in Florida: Plans Currently Included in the FCAT 2.0 Contract* (May 11, 2010), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/asp/k12memo/pdf/tngcbtf.pdf>; rule 6A-1.09422(2) and (3), F.A.C.

	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
<b>FCAT</b>	Reading (3-10, Retakes) Mathematics (3-10, Retakes) Science (5, 8, 11) Writing (4, 8, 10)	Reading (Retakes) Mathematics (10, Retakes) Science (5, 8, 11) Writing (4, 8, 10)	Reading (Retakes) Mathematics (Retakes) Writing (4, 8, 10)	Mathematics (Retakes) Writing (4, 8, 10)	Writing (4, 8, 10)
<b>FCAT 2.0</b>		Reading (3-10) Mathematics (3-8)	Reading (3-10) Mathematics (3-8) Science (5, 8)	Reading (3-10) Mathematics (3-8) Science (5, 8)	Reading (3-10) Mathematics (3-8) Science (5, 8)
<b>Florida EOC Assessments</b>		Algebra 1	Algebra 1 Geometry Biology 1	Algebra 1 Geometry Biology 1 US History	Algebra 1 Geometry Biology 1 US History Civics

### ***What are end-of-course assessments?***

EOC assessments are subject-specific assessments that are administered at the end of a particular course. EOC assessments must be rigorous, statewide, standardized, and developed or approved by the DOE.<sup>11</sup> In 2010, the Legislature required the DOE to implement statewide, standardized EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology 1 at the high school level,<sup>12</sup> and an EOC assessment in Civics Education at the middle school level.<sup>13</sup> Contingent upon funding, the Legislature also required the commissioner to establish an implementation schedule for the development and administration of additional statewide, standardized EOC assessments in English/Language Arts II,<sup>14</sup> Algebra 2, Chemistry, Physics, Earth/Space Science, United States (US) History, and World History.<sup>15</sup> Currently, the DOE is developing an EOC in US History.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>12</sup> Section 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>13</sup> Section 3, ch. 2010-48, L.O.F.

<sup>14</sup> Priority must be given to the development of EOC assessments in English/Language Arts II. The commissioner must evaluate the feasibility and effect of transitions from the grade 9 and grade 10 FCAT Reading and high school level FCAT Writing to an EOC assessment in English/Language Arts II and report the results of the evaluation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than July 1, 2011. Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.c., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>15</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.c., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>16</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(3)(e), F.A.C.

Statewide, standardized EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology 1, and Civics Education are required to have a one-year baseline administration, in which the student's performance on the EOC assessment constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade. After the one-year baseline administration, students must pass the EOC assessment in order to receive credit for the course.<sup>17</sup> The EOC assessment in US History is required to constitute at least 30 percent of the student's final course grade. Likewise, should EOC assessments be developed in English/Language Arts II, Algebra 2, Chemistry, Physics, Earth/Space Science, or World History, performance on the EOC assessment will constitute 30 percent of the student's final course grade.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, the commissioner is authorized to select one or more nationally developed comprehensive examinations, including, but not limited to, examinations for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced International Certificate of Education courses or industry-approved examinations to earn national industry certifications identified in the Industry Certification Funding List for use as EOC assessments.<sup>19</sup>

### ***How are statewide assessments developed and constructed?***

The FCAT and statewide, standardized EOC assessments are developed for use in Florida and are aligned to the knowledge and skills required for the grade level or subject as identified by benchmarks set forth in the *Sunshine State Standards*.<sup>20</sup> Test items are developed by the DOE, outside contractors, and several hundred Florida educators and citizens,<sup>21</sup> as follows:

- ❖ **Item Writing.** DOE develops and periodically revises test-item specifications that detail the specific *Sunshine State Standards* benchmarks to be assessed. Test writers from an outside contractor draft, review, and edit the test items.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.a.(I) and (II), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. The requirement to pass the EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology 1 is not coupled with a student's grade. In other words, a student could receive a grade of "C" in the course but not achieve the necessary credit to graduate if that student did not pass the EOC.

<sup>18</sup> See ss. 1003.428(4)(a) and 1003.429(5), F.S., as amended by ss. 3 and 4, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. To date, the commissioner has not selected any nationally developed examinations for use as EOC assessments.

<sup>19</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.b., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>20</sup> See *FCAT Handbook*, supra note 5, at 52; see also *Sunshine State Standards Fact Sheet*.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 39.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 43; see Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Test Item Specifications*, <http://fcats.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp> (last visited June 9, 2010).

- ❖ **Committee Reviews.** New test items are submitted to several committees composed of Florida educators and citizens.<sup>23</sup> The committees review test items for:
  - ♦ *Bias.* Whether test items provide an advantage or disadvantage (unrelated to an understanding of the content) to a student with certain personal characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, or geographic region.<sup>24</sup>
  - ♦ *Community Sensitivity.* Whether the subject matter of test items will be acceptable to students, their parents, and other members of Florida communities. Examples of sensitive topics may include wildfires, hurricanes, or other topics considered too offensive or sensitive for students or that may distract students. Sensitivity issues do not necessarily affect student success on an item, whereas bias may.<sup>25</sup>
  - ♦ *Content Validity.* Whether test items are appropriate for the grade level, accurately measure the benchmarks, evaluate the specified level of cognitive complexity, are clearly worded, and have only one correct answer for multiple-choice items.<sup>26</sup>
- ❖ **Field-Test Items.** New test items are field tested by Florida students taking the annual administration of the FCAT and statewide, standardized EOC assessments. Field-test items are not counted toward a student's score, but are embedded among the operational items that are counted. Field-test items are used to generate statistical data about the performance of students on the items. In addition, student responses to field-test items are further reviewed by committees to reveal any oversights in the design of the test items.<sup>27</sup>
- ❖ **Statistical Review.** DOE performs statistical analyses of student scores on the field-test items. A field-test item must satisfy certain quality criteria in order for the item to be included on the FCAT or statewide, standardized EOC assessments as an operational (scored) item.<sup>28</sup>
- ❖ **Test Construction.** DOE annually develops test-construction specifications that are used to build a complete test for a single year. Based on the specifications, DOE selects the test items and creates test forms that include operational items and field-test, anchor, or linking items.<sup>29</sup>

### **What types of test items are included on statewide assessments?**

Four types of test items are included on the FCAT:<sup>30</sup>

- ❖ **Operational Items.** Test items that have undergone extensive review and field testing and which are counted toward a student's score.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 44-45; see Florida Department of Education, *Participation in State Assessment Committees* (May 2008), available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/pdf/state-assessment-committees.pdf> [hereinafter *Assessment Committees*].

<sup>24</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 44 and 89.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 44.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 45 and 95.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 46.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 47.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 17, 47, 71-79 and 94.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 17, 46, and 92.

- ❖ **Field-Test Items.** New test items embedded among the operational items, but which are not counted toward a student's score. Field-test items generate statistical data about the performance of students on the items.<sup>32</sup>
- ❖ **Anchor Items.** Test items appearing as operational items which were in assessments in prior years. Anchor items are used to ensure that test scores may be comparable from year-to-year through a statistical analysis known as "equating."<sup>33</sup> Anchor items are not counted toward a student's score under Florida's equating design.<sup>34</sup>
- ❖ **Linking Items.** Operational items on one grade level's test are periodically included on tests for one grade level above and one grade level below the operational test for purposes of calculating a developmental scale.<sup>35</sup> A developmental scale shows whether a student's performance improved, declined, or remained consistent from grade to grade.<sup>36</sup> Linking items do not count toward a student's score if the items are not on grade level.<sup>37</sup>

Statewide, standardized EOC assessments will include operational items, and either field test or anchor items, but not linking items.<sup>38</sup>

FCAT and statewide, standardized EOC assessment test items appear in various formats,<sup>39</sup> which may include:

- ❖ **Multiple Choice.** Test items that present students with four possible options from which to choose. Multiple-choice items are included on all FCAT assessments, except for FCAT Writing and on each statewide, standardized EOC assessment.<sup>40</sup>
- ❖ **Gridded Response.** Test items that require students to solve a problem for which the answer is numerical. Answers must be written and bubbled into a number grid.<sup>41</sup> Gridded-response items are included on FCAT Mathematics and Science, and will be included on the Algebra 1 and Geometry EOC assessments.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 17, 46, and 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 89 and 91; *see infra* text accompanying note 74.

<sup>34</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 78-79 and 92.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 79.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 79.

<sup>38</sup> Staff Director telephone conversation with Florida Department of Education, Office of Assessment (June 10, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> The FCAT previously included "performance tasks" (*i.e.*, short- and extended-response items), on which students respond to items in their own words or show their solutions to problems. *Id.* at 14. However, due to statutory requirements to administer assessments as late as possible and report results as early as possible, the DOE discontinued use of these items. Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum: Changes to FCAT in 2009 and Beyond* (March 31, 2009), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5347/fcat09.pdf>; *see s. 1008.22(3)(c)14.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.*

<sup>40</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 14 and 17; Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Test Design Summary* (Oct. 2009), available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/pdf/fc05designsummary.pdf> [hereinafter *Test Design*].

<sup>41</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 14 and 91.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.* at 14, 17 and 91; *Test Design*, *supra* note 40, at 6.

- ❖ **Writing Prompt.** Test items in which the student is given a topic on which to write an essay. Writing-prompt items are included on FCAT Writing.<sup>43</sup> Each FCAT Writing prompt has two parts: the writing situation and the directions for writing. The writing situation orients students to the subject about which they are to write. The directions for writing guide the students to think about the topic before they begin to write.<sup>44</sup>

### ***In what grades do students take the FCAT and statewide, standardized end-of-course assessments?***

The FCAT must include comprehensive assessments of:

- ❖ Reading and mathematics annually in grades 3 through 10, except, beginning with the 2010-11 academic year, the administration of grade 9 FCAT Mathematics is discontinued and beginning with the 2011-12 academic year, the administration of grade 10 FCAT Mathematics is discontinued; and
- ❖ Writing and science at least once at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, except, beginning with the 2011-12 academic year, the administration of FCAT Science at the high school level is discontinued.<sup>45</sup>

For courses that require a statewide, standardized EOC assessment, all students enrolled in the course or an equivalent course must take the EOC assessment, regardless of grade level. The following EOC assessments will be administered:

- ❖ Beginning with the 2010-11 academic year, Algebra 1;
- ❖ Beginning with the 2011-12 academic year, Geometry and Biology 1;
- ❖ Beginning with the 2012-13 academic year, US History; and
- ❖ Beginning with the 2013-14 academic year, Civics Education.<sup>46</sup>

The following table shows the grade levels at which each assessment is administered and the types of test items included on each assessment.<sup>47</sup>

	<b>2010-11</b>				<b>2011-12</b>			
<i>Grade</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>Science</i>
3	MC		MC		MC		MC	
4	MC	WP	MC, GR		MC	WP	MC, GR	
5	MC		MC, GR	MC	MC		MC, GR	MC
6	MC		MC, GR		MC		MC, GR	
7	MC		MC, GR		MC		MC, GR	
8	MC	WP	MC, GR	MC, GR	MC	WP	MC, GR	MC
9	MC				MC			
10	MC	WP	MC, GR		MC	WP		

<sup>43</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 15 and 17; *Test Design*, *supra* note 40, at 6.

<sup>44</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 15 and 93.

<sup>45</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)1., F.S., *as amended by* s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>46</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(3)(c)-(f), F.A.C.

<sup>47</sup> E-mail, Florida Department of Education (May 4, 2010).

11				MC, GR				
Retake	MC		MC, GR		MC		MC, GR	
Algebra 1			MC, GR				MC, GR	
Geometry							MC, GR	
Biology 1								MC

**KEY:** **MC** Multiple choice  
**GR** Gridded response  
**WP** Writing prompt

### ***When is the FCAT administered?***

The commissioner is required to establish a schedule for administration of the FCAT and reporting of student test results. The commissioner must consider the observance of religious and school holidays when establishing the assessment schedule.<sup>48</sup> Each public school must follow the testing and reporting schedule unless specifically exempted by State Board of Education rule.<sup>49</sup> To the extent feasible with available technology and funding, the schedule must provide that statewide assessments are administered as late as possible in the school year and student test results are reported as early as possible in the school year.<sup>50</sup>

Beginning with the 2010-11 academic year, FCAT Writing must be administered no earlier than the week of March 1, and other FCAT assessments must be administered no earlier than the week of April 15.<sup>51</sup> FCAT results must be made available no later than the week of June 8.<sup>52</sup>

Statewide, standardized EOC assessments must be administered during a 3-week period at the end of the course.<sup>53</sup> Assessment results must be made available no later than one week after the school district completes testing for each course.<sup>54</sup>

The commissioner must annually, by August 1, publish statewide assessment testing and reporting schedules for the school year following the upcoming school year.<sup>55</sup> The commissioner has published the following testing schedules for the 2009-10 academic year, but the 2010-11 statewide assessment schedule is under revision due to the 2010 Legislature's changes<sup>56</sup> to the statewide assessment program.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>49</sup> Section 1008.22(6), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>50</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>51</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14.b., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>52</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>53</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)15.c., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. The commissioner selects a 3-week administration period for assessments that meets the intent of EOC assessments and provides student results prior to the end of the course. School districts select one testing week within that 3-week period. For EOC assessments administered at the end of the first semester, the commissioner determines the most appropriate testing date based on a school district's academic calendar.

<sup>54</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14.a., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>55</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)14., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>56</sup> See ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>57</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Florida Statewide Assessment Program 2010-2011 Schedule*, available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5478/stwasa.pdf>.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>2009-10 Schedule</b> <sup>58</sup>
<b>FCAT Writing</b> (Grades 4, 8, and 10)	February 9-11, 2010
<b>FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics</b> (Grades 3-10) <b>FCAT Science</b> (Grades 5, 8, and 11)	March 9-19, 2010
<b>FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics</b> (Grades 11-Adult Retakes)	October 12-16, 2009 October 19-23, 2009 OR March 9-19, 2010

### **How is the FCAT scored?**

Multiple-choice and gridded-response items are “machine scored,” that is, scanned and scored using automated systems.<sup>59</sup> Prompted essays are handscored by trained evaluators.<sup>60</sup> After student responses on the FCAT are machine scored or handscored, DOE performs statistical analyses on the responses, known as “equating,” to compare them to responses from testing in prior years.<sup>61</sup>

To equate tests from one year to the next, some operational (scored) items from one year are selected to appear identically on the following year’s test. Test items repeated the following year are known as “anchor items” and are not counted as part of the student’s score, under Florida’s design. Based on the statistical relationship between student scores on the anchor items and scores on the operational items, the scores on the second year’s test are scaled to scores on the first year’s test, thereby allowing the scores to be compared.<sup>62</sup> The results of equating are scale scores ranging from 100 to 500.<sup>63</sup>

### **How are FCAT and statewide, standardized EOC assessment scores reported and what do the scores mean?**

Student achievement on FCAT Reading, Mathematics, and Science and all statewide, standardized EOC assessments is measured by use of scale scores and achievement levels. Achievement levels range from 1 through 5, with Level 1 being the lowest, Level 5 being the highest, and Level 3 indicating satisfactory performance. For FCAT Writing, student achievement is scored using a rubric scale of 1 through 6.<sup>64</sup> Student achievement on FCAT Reading and Mathematics is also reported by developmental scale score.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Florida Statewide Assessment Program 2009-2010 Schedule* (July 30, 2009), available at [http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5063/the\\_FCATscheduleb.pdf](http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5063/the_FCATscheduleb.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 69.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 70-73.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* at 77-78 and 91.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 77-78 and 89.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.* at 78 and 94; see Rule 6A-1.09422(4) and (5), F.A.C.

<sup>64</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)5., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>65</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(4) and (5), F.A.C.



The state board must also designate, by rule, a passing score for grade 10 FCAT Reading and Mathematics and EOC assessments.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the state board must designate, by rule, a score for each statewide, standardized EOC assessment which indicates that a student is high achieving and has the potential to meet college-readiness standards by the time the student graduates from high school.<sup>67</sup>

**Scale Scores and Achievement Levels.** Student scores on the FCAT are reported on a score scale from 100 to 500.<sup>68</sup> State board rule identifies ranges of scale scores, by grade level, for each achievement level.<sup>69</sup> For example, a scale score from 100 to 258 on FCAT Reading in grade 3 is reported as Level 1, while a scale score from 394 to 500 is reported as Level 5.<sup>70</sup>

The upper and lower scale scores of each achievement-level range are known as “cut-point scores.”<sup>71</sup> After a new assessment has been administered for the first time, the DOE establishes standards-setting committees to recommend cut-point scores for the five achievement levels. Committee members include teachers from the targeted grade levels and subject areas, school and district curriculum specialists, school and district administrators, university faculty from the discipline areas, and business and community leaders.<sup>72</sup>

**Developmental Scale Scores.** State board rule also provides for the reporting of FCAT scores according to a developmental scale, which represents a student’s grade-to-grade growth.<sup>73</sup> DOE establishes the developmental scale after the administration of a new assessment in sequential grades. For FCAT Reading and Mathematics, the developmental scale comprises ranges of scores from 0 to 3000, and was established by performing statistical analyses, known as “linking,” which are similar to equating.<sup>74</sup> Operational (scored) items included on one grade level’s FCAT appear identically as “linking items” on the FCAT tests for one grade level above and one grade level below the operational test. Linking allows DOE to calculate the developmental scale by comparing the statistical relationship between student performance on linking items at one grade level to performance at the adjacent grade levels.<sup>75</sup>

A student’s FCAT scale score ranging from 100 to 500 is converted to a developmental scale score ranging from 0 to 3000, which allows the student’s FCAT score to be plotted on the developmental scale.<sup>76</sup> The student’s developmental scale score shows whether the student’s performance improved, declined, or remained consistent from grade to grade.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)6., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>67</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)7., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>68</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(4), F.A.C.

<sup>69</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(5), F.A.C.

<sup>70</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(5)(a), F.A.C.

<sup>71</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 79.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 79; *Assessment Committees*, *supra* note 23, at 4.

<sup>73</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(4) and (5), F.A.C.; *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 78-79.

<sup>74</sup> *FCAT Handbook*, *supra* note 5, at 78-79.

<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at 78-79 and 92.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.* at 78.

<sup>77</sup> *Id.* at 79.

Developmental scale scores are calculated in grades 3 through 10 for FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics.<sup>78</sup> Linking requires scale scores for adjacent grade-level tests, therefore, developmental scale scores cannot be calculated for FCAT Writing or Science.<sup>79</sup>

**Holistic Scoring Rubric.** FCAT Writing scores range from 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest and 3.5 indicating proficiency for the purpose of Florida's school grade calculations, based on a holistic scoring rubric. A trained reader evaluates the overall quality of each student's essay with respect to focus, organization, support, and conventions.<sup>80</sup> Each essay is scored by one reader, with 20 percent of essays read by a second reader for quality control purposes.<sup>81</sup>

### **How are a student's statewide assessment scores used?<sup>82</sup>**

**School Grades.**<sup>83</sup> School grades are based, in part, upon the following:

- ❖ Student achievement scores, including scores on FCAT Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Writing and statewide, standardized EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, Biology 1, and Civics Education.<sup>84</sup>
- ❖ Student learning gains in reading and mathematics, including performance on FCAT Reading and Mathematics and statewide, standardized EOC assessments in Algebra 1 and Geometry;<sup>85</sup>
- ❖ Improvement of the lowest 25th percentile of students in the school in reading and mathematics, as measured by FCAT Reading and Mathematics and statewide, standardized EOC assessments in Algebra 1 and Geometry;<sup>86</sup> and
- ❖ Performance of the school's students on additional statewide, standardized EOC assessments developed or approved by the commissioner, including, contingent upon funding the statewide, standardized EOC assessment in US History.<sup>87</sup>

**High School Graduation.** To receive a standard high school diploma, students must earn passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT Reading and Mathematics or attain concordant scores on

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<sup>78</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(5)(a), F.A.C.

<sup>79</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Frequently Asked Questions: FCAT – Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test*, Question No. 23, <http://www.fldoe.org/faq/default.asp?Dept=179&ID=984> (last visited June 9, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Rubrics*, <http://fcats.fldoe.org/rubrcpag.asp> (last visited June 9, 2010); see also Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Writing Rubric - Grade 4* (2003), available at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/rubrcw04.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum: Changes to FCAT Writing* (Sept. 16, 2009), available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5531/FCATwriting.pdf>. Previously, two readers were used for all essays, and the average of each reader's score was used to determine each student's proficiency.

<sup>82</sup> See Florida Department of Education, *Statewide Uses of the FCAT*, <http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/FCATStatewideUses.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> See s. 1008.34, F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. ; rule 6A-1.09981, F.A.C.; see also School Grades Fact Sheet.

<sup>84</sup> Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.a., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>85</sup> Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.b., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>86</sup> Section 1008.34(3)(b)1.c., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>87</sup> Section 1008.34(3)(b)2.e., F.S., as amended by s. 11, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F. see s. 1008.22(3)(c)2.b. and c., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

the SAT or ACT.<sup>88</sup> However, the FCAT graduation requirement for a standard high school diploma may be waived for a student with a disability by the student's individual educational plan (IEP) team.<sup>89</sup> In addition, under extraordinary circumstances, the commissioner may grant a special exemption from the FCAT graduation requirement for a student with a disability.<sup>90</sup>

**High School Course Credit.** Following the baseline administration of EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology 1, the state board is required to designate a passing score for each EOC assessment.<sup>91</sup> Beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2011-12 academic year, a student must pass the EOC assessment in Algebra 1 or attain an equivalent score on another assessment<sup>92</sup> in order to earn course credit.<sup>93</sup> Beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2012-13 academic year, a student must pass the EOC assessment in Geometry and Biology 1 or attain an equivalent score on another assessment<sup>94</sup> in order to earn course credit.<sup>95</sup> However, a student with a disability for whom the IEP team determines that an EOC assessment cannot accurately measure the student's abilities may have the EOC assessment results waived for the purpose of determining the student's course grade and credit.<sup>96</sup>

The Credit Acceleration Program (CAP) allows a secondary student who is not enrolled in a course that requires a statewide, standardized EOC assessment to earn high school credit in the course if the student attains a score indicating satisfactory performance on the EOC assessment.<sup>97</sup>

**Middle School Promotion.** Following the baseline administration of the EOC assessment in Civics Education, the state board must designate a passing score. Beginning with students entering grade 6 in the 2014-15 academic year, a student must pass the EOC assessment in order to pass the course and earn course credit.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Sections 1003.428(4)(b), 1003.429(6)(a), 1003.43(5)(a) and 1008.22(3)(c)5. and (10), F.S.; rule 6A-1.09422(7), F.A.C.; Florida Department of Education, *FCAT Graduation Requirements* (May 2008), available at <http://fcats.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf> [hereinafter *Graduation Requirements*]; see High School Graduation Fact Sheet.

<sup>89</sup> Sections 1003.428(8)(b), 1003.43(11)(b), and 1008.22(3)(c)8., F.S.; see Florida Department of Education, *Tracking Student Performance for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Waiver, Technical Assistance Paper No. 2007-1* (July 2006), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/y2007-1.pdf>; Florida Department of Education, *Waiver of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Graduation Requirement for Students with Disabilities* (Waiver Form) (Aug. 1, 2006), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/fcat/fcatwaiv.pdf>; FCAT Accommodations and Alternate Assessment Fact Sheet.

<sup>90</sup> Rule 6A-1.09431, F.A.C.; see Florida Department of Education, *Checklist for Procedures for Special Exemption from Graduation Test Requirements for Students with Disabilities Seeking a Standard High School Diploma* (Jan. 2003), available at [http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/fcatasd\\_check.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/fcatasd_check.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)6., F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>92</sup> See s. 1008.22(11), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>93</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.a.(I) and (II), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; see also High School Graduation Fact Sheet.

<sup>94</sup> See s. 1008.22(11), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>95</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)2.a.(I) and (II), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>96</sup> Sections 1003.428(8)(b)2., 1008.22(3)(c)8., F.S., as amended by ss. 3 and 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>97</sup> Section 1003.4295(3), F.S., as amended by s. 5, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>98</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c), F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

**Third-Grade Promotion.** To be promoted from grade 3 to grade 4, a student must score at Level 2 or higher on FCAT Reading for grade 3.<sup>99</sup> A district school board may exempt students from mandatory retention in grade 3 for one of the following “good cause” exemptions:

- ❖ English language learners (ELLs)<sup>100</sup> with less than 2 years in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program;<sup>101</sup>
- ❖ Students with disabilities whose IEPs indicate that participation in FCAT is not appropriate according to state board rule;<sup>102</sup>
- ❖ Students who demonstrate acceptable performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the state board (*i.e.*, scoring at least in the 51st percentile on the reading subtests of the SAT-9<sup>103</sup> or at least in the 45th percentile on the reading subtests of SAT-10<sup>104</sup>);<sup>105</sup>
- ❖ Students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that they are reading at a level equal to at least a Level 2 on FCAT Reading;<sup>106</sup>
- ❖ Students with disabilities who take the FCAT, were previously retained in any grade from kindergarten through grade 3, and have received intensive remediation in reading for more than 2 years;<sup>107</sup> and
- ❖ Students who were previously retained for a total of 2 years from kindergarten through grade 3 and who have received intensive remediation in reading for 2 or more years.<sup>108</sup>

School districts must also implement a policy of midyear promotion to grade 4 of a student retained in grade 3, if the student demonstrates, based on subsequent assessments, alternative assessments, and portfolio reviews, that the student is a successful and independent reader, reading at or above grade level, and ready for grade 4.<sup>109</sup> Students promoted after November 1 must score above Level 2 on FCAT Reading for grade 3.<sup>110</sup>

**Remediation in Reading and Mathematics.** Students scoring below proficiency in reading and mathematics on the FCAT must receive remedial instruction, as follows:

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<sup>99</sup> Section 1008.25(5)(b), F.S.

<sup>100</sup> See English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Fact Sheet.

<sup>101</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)1., F.S.

<sup>102</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)2., F.S.; see rule 6A-1.0943(1)(a), F.A.C. (criteria for exclusion of students with disabilities from statewide and district assessment programs).

<sup>103</sup> See Pearson Education, *Stanford Achievement Test Series, Ninth Edition (SAT-9)*, <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=E132C&Mode=summary> (last visited June 9, 2010).

<sup>104</sup> See Pearson Education, *Stanford Achievement Test Series, Tenth Edition (SAT-10)*, <http://www.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=SAT10C&Mode=summary> (last visited June 9, 2010).

<sup>105</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)3., F.S.; rule 6A-1.094221(1)(a) and (2)(b), F.A.C.

<sup>106</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)4., F.S.; rule 6A-1.094221(1)(b) and (3), F.A.C.

<sup>107</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)5., F.S.

<sup>108</sup> Section 1008.25(6)(b)6., F.S.

<sup>109</sup> Section 1008.25(7)(b)4., F.S.; see rule 6A-1.094222, F.A.C.

<sup>110</sup> Section 1008.25(7)(b)4., F.S.

- ❖ A student identified to have a substantial deficiency in reading through local or statewide assessments in any grade from kindergarten through grade 3, or through teacher observations, must be given intensive reading instruction until the deficiency is remedied.<sup>111</sup>
- ❖ A middle school student (grades 6-8) or high school student (grades 9-11) must:
  - ♦ If the student scores at Level 1 on FCAT Reading, complete an intensive reading course the following year. If the student scores at Level 2, the student must be placed in either an intensive reading course or a content-area course in which reading strategies are delivered, as determined by diagnosis of the student's reading needs.<sup>112</sup>
  - ♦ If the student scores at Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT Mathematics, receive remediation, which may be integrated into other mathematics courses.<sup>113</sup>

**Progress Monitoring.** A student in grades 3-10 who scores below Level 3 on FCAT Reading or FCAT Mathematics must be administered additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student's difficulty, the areas of academic need, and strategies for appropriate intervention and instruction.<sup>114</sup> The student's school, in consultation with the student's parents, must implement one of the following progress monitoring plans:

- ❖ A federally required student plan, such as an IEP;
- ❖ A schoolwide system of progress monitoring for all students; or
- ❖ An individualized progress monitoring plan.<sup>115</sup>

**Merit-Based Pay Supplements.** Performance-based pay supplements under the Merit Award Program must be awarded according to an assessment of employee performance, which must be based at least 60 percent upon the performance of the students assigned to the employee.<sup>116</sup> Student performance must be evaluated based on student academic proficiency, gains in student learning, or both using statewide standardized tests (*i.e.*, FCAT and EOC assessments). For subjects and grades not assessed by statewide assessments, a national, state, or district-determined examination must be used to evaluate student performance.<sup>117</sup> Participation in MAP is optional. In FY 2009-10, four districts participated.

**Adequate Yearly Progress.** FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics for grades 3-10, and the FCAT Writing in grades 4, 8, and 10, are used to determine a school's adequate yearly progress (AYP) in accordance with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.<sup>118</sup> However, as grades 9 and 10 FCAT Mathematics are discontinued, results of the EOC assessment in Algebra 1 will be used to calculate AYP.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Section 1008.25(5)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-6.054, F.A.C.

<sup>112</sup> Sections 1003.4156(1)(b) and (2) and 1003.428(2)(b)2.c., F.S.

<sup>113</sup> Sections 1003.4156(1)(c) and 1003.428(2)(b)2.d., F.S.

<sup>114</sup> Section 1008.25(4)(a), F.S.

<sup>115</sup> Section 1008.25(4)(b), F.S.

<sup>116</sup> Section 1012.225(1) and (3)(a)-(c), F.S.; see Merit Award Program Fact Sheet.

<sup>117</sup> Section 1012.225(3)(c), F.S.

<sup>118</sup> Florida Department of Education, *2008 Guide to Calculating AYP* (July 2008), at 2, available at <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org/pdf/0708/2008AYPTAP.pdf>; see also *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act Fact Sheet*.

<sup>119</sup> E-mail, Florida Department of Education, Office of Assessment (Feb. 19, 2010).

## What options are available for students who do not pass the grade 10 FCAT?

If a student does not pass the grade 10 FCAT, he or she must retake the test at every subsequent administration until the student passes the FCAT or receives a concordant score on another assessment, as determined by the commissioner.<sup>120</sup> Based on the FCAT testing schedule, a student generally has five opportunities to pass the grade 10 FCAT before graduation.<sup>121</sup>

The SAT and ACT are the two assessments that a student may receive a concordant score on in order to meet the high school graduation requirement. For the 2010-11 academic year, the concordant scores on the SAT or ACT are:<sup>122</sup>

<b>FCAT</b>	<b>SAT</b>	<b>ACT</b>
<b>FCAT Reading</b>	420	18
<b>FCAT Mathematics</b>	340	15

Students who fail to pass the grade 10 FCAT or achieve a concordant score on the SAT or ACT, (who by the end of grade 12 otherwise meet graduation requirements) must be provided the following learning opportunities:

- ❖ Participation in an accelerated high school equivalency (GED) diploma preparation program during the summer;
- ❖ Allowance to take the College Placement Test and be admitted to remedial or credit courses at a community college, upon receipt of a certificate of completion; and
- ❖ Participation in an adult general education program for the period that the student requires to master English, reading, mathematics, or any other subject required for high school graduation.<sup>123</sup> A student attending an adult general education program has the opportunity to take the grade 10 FCAT an unlimited number of times in order to receive a standard high school diploma.<sup>124</sup>

In addition, students enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program for less than 2 years, who meet all requirements for a standard high school diploma except passage of the grade 10 FCAT or achievement of a concordant score on the SAT or ACT, may receive immersion English language instruction the summer after the end of grade 12. The

<sup>120</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c)8. and (10) F.S., as amended by s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>121</sup> *Id.*; see *supra* text and table accompanying note 57. Students previously had six opportunities. However, in 2009, all summer FCAT retake administrations were eliminated due to budget constraints. Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum: Changes to FCAT in 2009 and Beyond* (March 31, 2009), at 1, available at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5347/fcat09.pdf>.

<sup>122</sup> Rule 6A-1.09422(7), F.A.C.; Florida Department of Education, Office of Assessment and School Performance, *FCAT Graduation Requirements* (Nov. 2009), available at <http://fcat.fldoe.org/pdf/fcatpass.pdf>.

<sup>123</sup> Section 1003.433(2), F.S.

<sup>124</sup> Section 1003.433(2)(c), F.S.

students receiving immersion instruction may retake the grade 10 FCAT, SAT, or ACT and may receive a standard high school diploma upon passage of the grade 10 FCAT or receipt of a concordant score on the SAT or ACT.<sup>125</sup>

### ***What options are available for students who do not pass a statewide, standardized EOC assessment?***

For purposes of course credit, a student may satisfy the requirement to pass a statewide, standardized EOC assessment by attaining equivalent scores on another assessment, as determined by the commissioner.<sup>126</sup> Use of an equivalent score for purposes of grade adjustment, grade forgiveness, or course credit recovery is contingent upon and subject to district school board rules.<sup>127</sup>

Florida law does not specifically address whether a student who does not pass a statewide, standardized EOC assessment may retake the assessment during a subsequent administration without retaking the course. Accordingly, district school boards will develop their own policies. As previously discussed, a student's performance on the "must-pass" EOC assessments in Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology 1 is not required to affect a student's grade, only whether the student earns credit in the course.<sup>128</sup> For a Civics Education course, a student must pass the EOC assessment in order to earn a passing grade and receive the required credit for middle grades promotion.<sup>129</sup>

### ***What test-preparation activities are allowed for the FCAT or statewide, standardized EOC assessments?***

District school boards must prohibit each public school from suspending its regular program of curricula in order to give practice tests or engage in other test-preparation activities for the FCAT or statewide, standardized EOC assessments.<sup>130</sup> However, the following activities are allowed:

- ❖ Distributing DOE-published sample test books and answer keys;
- ❖ Providing individualized instruction in test-taking strategies, without suspending the school's regular program of curricula, for a student who scores at Level 1 or Level 2 on the FCAT or an EOC assessment;
- ❖ Providing individualized instruction for a student who scores at Level 1 or Level 2 on the FCAT or an EOC assessment or who is identified as having a deficiency through a diagnostic assessment given by the school district;
- ❖ Including test-taking exercises and strategies in curricula for intensive reading and mathematics intervention courses; and

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<sup>125</sup> Section 1004.433(3), F.S.

<sup>126</sup> Section 1008.22(11)(a), F.S., *as amended by* s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>127</sup> Section 1008.22(11)(b), F.S., *as amended by* s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.

<sup>128</sup> See s. 1008.22(3)(c)2.a.(I) and (II), F.S., *as amended by* s. 8, ch. 2010-22, L.O.F.; *see also supra* note 17.

<sup>129</sup> Section 1008.22(3)(c), F.S., *as amended by* ch. 2010-48, L.O.F.

<sup>130</sup> Section 1008.22(4), F.S.

- ❖ Giving a practice test or engaging in other test-preparation activities for the FCAT or an EOC assessment, which are determined necessary in state board rule:
  - ♦ To familiarize students with the organization of the assessment, format of the test items, and test directions; or
  - ♦ For the valid and reliable administration of the FCAT or an EOC assessment.<sup>131</sup>

### ***Where can I get additional information?***

#### ***Department of Education***

Office of Assessment

(850) 245-0513

<http://www.fldoe.org/asp>

#### ***Florida House of Representatives***

Education Committee

(850) 488-7451

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

#### ***Florida House of Representatives***

Appropriations Committee

(850) 488-6204

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

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<sup>131</sup> Section 1008.22(4)(a)-(e), F.S.



